

VZCZCXRO8576
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1528/01 1281018
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 081018Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1064
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001528

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UN](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: UNAMI - AN OPPORTUNITY TO REPLACE LEADERSHIP AND
MANDATE

REF: A. A) BAGHDAD 1432

[1](#)B. B) BAGHDAD 1434

[1](#)C. C) USUN 325.

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Crocker for reasons 1.4(b) and
(d).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary. The August renewal of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) mandate and expiration of Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) Ashraf Qazi's third term in office provide an opportunity to expand UNAMI's contribution to reconciliation, especially in the areas of constitutional review, Kirkuk, disputed border resolution, and national dialogue. The UNAMI mandate should explicitly reference these new missions, while continuing existing capacity building and reconstruction in the areas of electoral assistance, civil society, rule of law, and humanitarian aid. In selecting the leader for this renewed effort, a non-Muslim SRSG may be the best positioned to escape perceptions of bias and gain the confidence of the Government of Iraq (GOI).
End Summary.

A ROCKY HISTORY, BUT OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAD

[1](#)2. (S) SRSG Qazi's UNAMI mission has had a rocky presence in Iraq over the past three years. In August 2004 SRSG Qazi inherited a UNAMI still reeling from the shock of the August 19, 2003 Canal Hotel bombing which killed 22 people, including SRSG Sergio Vieira de Mello. Under Qazi's cautious hand, UNAMI provided limited assistance to the GOI in five core areas: (1) technical assistance to the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC), (2) electoral assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), (3) humanitarian aid and protection to IDPs and refugees, (4) protection of human rights and rule of law, and (5) development and reconstruction of civil society.

[1](#)3. (S) Unfortunately, UNAMI activities have stagnated over the past two years as enthusiasm has evaporated. Staffing was reduced from 104 to 55 in the fall of 2006, UNAMI headquarters were split between Amman and Baghdad, and most humanitarian and civil society functions have been moved to Amman. Although technical assistance to the CRC and IHEC continue, humanitarian efforts, capacity building and reconstruction of civil society have all but vanished. There has also been a lack of political will at UNAMI to actively pursue or attempt to broaden their mission.

[1](#)4. (S) UNAMI has the opportunity to play a much more substantive role in Iraq by tackling in a constructive manner some of the most sectarian issues dividing the country. These include some or all of the following: (1) arbitrate the status of Kirkuk, (2) arbitrate provincial border disputes beyond Kirkuk, (3) broker the constitutional review, (4) guide a national dialog on reconciliation, and (5) engage in

governorate capacity building. Deputy SRSG for Political Affairs Michael Schulenburg has drafted several papers proposing these areas of engagement.

OBSTACLES TO A DEEPER ENGAGEMENT

15. (S) When pressed on the staff drawdown and missed opportunities, UNAMI interlocutors revealed a number of issues they feel block greater engagement. These include an outdated and soon expiring mandate that focused primarily on the transition period prior to GOI sovereignty, a perception of antagonism from the GOI for the scandal-ridden Oil for Food program, a perception by Iraqis that UNAMI has a Sunni bias, low risk tolerance at the Department of Political Affairs at UN headquarters in New York, logistical difficulties to travel around the country, the lack of permanent facilities, a headquarters function split between Amman and Baghdad, conflict between the Deputy SRSG for Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP Iraqi leadership, and an SRSG who is completing a three year tour, making him the longest serving SRSG at any UN mission.

16. (C) In recent weeks UNAMI momentum has been further disrupted with the resignation of Deputy SRSG for Humanitarian Affairs Jean Marie Fakhouri and the mishandling of the release of the first quarter 2007 Human Rights Report.

17. (S) However, a number of supposed obstacles cited by SRSG Qazi are not credible and would not block efforts backed by sustained political will. For example, Chief Electoral Advisor Sandra Mitchell is leading the largest engagement of

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electoral assistance and capacity building for the IHEC, despite the clear expiration of UNAMI's previous mandate to support the 2005 elections. Mitchell operates under a GOI letter of invitation from Council of Representatives Speaker Mashhadani, which she secured on her own initiative. Mitchell surmounts the UNAMI staffing cap by entering into arrangements to place excess team members in local NGOs.

18. (S) Post and our colleagues at the UK Embassy agree that an opportunity now exists to address some of these obstacles to a more robust and constructive UNAMI engagement. Specifically, it may be productive to pursue changes in the UNAMI mandate and install fresh leadership. This may unleash a stronger political will within UNAMI that should overcome many of the remaining perceived obstacles and heal the distrust by the GOI for greater UNAMI engagement.

A REVISED MANDATE

19. (S) The current UNAMI mandate (UN Security Council Resolution 1700) expires August 10, 2007. A new mandate should expand UNAMI's role to focus on more substantive issues of national reconciliation, as well as continue current electoral assistance, humanitarian aid, and civil society reconstruction. National reconciliation opportunities exist to broker the constitutional review process, arbitrate provincial boundary disputes, and lead a national dialog on reconciliation. UNAMI could also play a useful role in finding a solution to Kirkuk, if Iraqi political parties allow it. SRSG Qazi has repeatedly told poloffs, however, that he will not pursue these topics unless they are explicitly affirmed in a new mandate. To be effective, any renewal or expansion of UNAMI's mandate should be preceded by a letter of invitation from the GOI.

FRESH LEADERSHIP

¶10. (S) SRSG Qazi's current term expires on August 10, 2007. First appointed on July 14, 2004, Qazi's three years make him the longest serving SRSG in any UN mission. However, post and our UK colleagues observe that Qazi's risk aversion has grown as his term has progressed. UNAMI staff members told poloffs that Qazi repeatedly squashes attempts to increase project staffing, and Deputy SRSG Schulenburg has stated that UNAMI "does not have a vision." In addition, the mishandling of the UNAMI human rights report reinforced the Prime Minister Office's impression that UNAMI has a pro-Sunni bias and that Qazi may not have full control over his organization. The recent resignation of Deputy SRSG for Humanitarian Affairs Jean Marie Fakhouri revealed that the Amman portion of the UNAMI mission operates amid considerable internal dissension and accusations of pro-Sunni bias.

¶11. (S) The expiration of Qazi's term and renewal of the UNAMI mandate present an opportunity to install fresh leadership, which could heal the rift between UNAMI and the Government of Iraq. Prime Minister advisors have told poloffs that only a non-Muslim SRSG will fully escape perception of sectarian bias.
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